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Pelicans
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The city of the pelicans.

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joint, between the face of the ice-foot and the pack ice, which rises and falls at every tide, a little water is forced up at each rising tide, and, freezing, forms a very narrow, tortuous ribbon of glare ice, frequently interrupted, and sometimes lacking entirely for several hundred feet. To reach this from the ice-foot the dogs were detached from the sledges, the sledges lowered by lines, then the dogs pushed or pulled until they were made to jump, when they were again attached to the sledge, which moved on to make room for another to be lowered, and so on, until all were down. Slowly we worked our way along this path; dogs and drivers slipping and falling repeatedly, and the sledges slewing sideways in a way that strained them to the utmost, which in any other type of sledge would result in speedy destruction. Some of the interruptions to the continuity of this ribbon of ice could be smoothed out with the pickaxes; at other places it was necessary to make a detour out into the ragged pack. Seven hours of this kind of work brought us to Cape Lieber, and I sent two of my men up over the ice-foot parapet to find a suitable snowdrift for the construction of igloos. In a little while I heard a shout, and saw my two scouts waving from the top of an ice-foot pinnacle a few hundred years ahead. They disappeared, and we moved on with the sledges

until we reached the place where they had been.

Dogs were unhitched and fastened, as usual, and then each of the Eskimos climbed over the ice-foot with his snow knife and disappeared behind the parapet, where the other two were already cutting snow blocks. I fastened my dogs, got out their ration of pemmican, cut it up, and fed them, standing by with whip in hand to see that there was no bullying, and that each dog got his share. Then I unpacked the cooker, oil can, and kitchen box, passing them up the ice-foot as high as I could reach. I did not wait for the completion of the igloo to commence my preparations for supper, but with a few strokes of the spade excavated a niche in the snowbank, put the cooker in out of the wind, filled the lamp with oil and the boiler with ice, placed a few snow blocks around it for still better shelter, and lighted up. By the time the igloo was completed I had enough water melted for our tea, and supper was entirely ready by the time my men had fed the dogs; and they lost no time in freeing their clothing of snow, and joining me in the igloo.

And so it goes, day after day, till men and dogs are worn to a wire edge, and it seems as if the world were one great dreary ball of hard work and discomfort. 'Tis a dog's life, but a man's work.



Supper on the Floe.



"The young pelicans * * * reminded me of boys as they gathered here and there in groups, chattering in guttural tones."

THE CITY OF THE PELICANS

By HERBERT K. JOB

Author of "Among the Water Fowl"

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

TWO of us left New York just before midnight on the 8th of last April, bound for Florida. Hardly a sign of real spring had yet appeared, and one of a long series of cold, easterly rain-storms was raging. The next afternoon, in Virginia and North Carolina, we gazed upon blossoming peach trees and bursting buds. One night more, and, in early morning, at Savannah, nature was in the full glory of summer's leaf and flower. By middle afternoon, half way down the east coast of Florida, on the bank of breezy Indian River, the journey ended. Easterly storms were forgotten, as for three weeks—one day excepted—the sun shone brightly, with a daily warmth of 80 to 85 degrees, tempered by the fresh breeze that arose regularly about nine o'clock in the morning.

On the morning of the 16th we were starting in a small sail-boat for Pelican Island, twelve miles farther down the Indian River—scudding along, rejoicing in the balmy air and

the beautiful tropical surroundings. Shiny, silvery mullets were leaping high out of the water in all directions, falling back with resounding splash, at times almost into the boat; flocks of bluebills rose from before us every few minutes; eagles and fish hawks were wheeling about, ready to descend upon unwary fish. By ten o'clock we began to see lines of great pelicans, with slow, measured wing beats, flying down stream past us, and before eleven the guide pointed out Pelican Island.

No tremendous cliffs were there, as at Bird Rock. Indeed, it was hard to distinguish this small, low island from the adjacent shore, half a mile away, with its jungle of palms and mangroves, until we had come quite close. Then we could see many beating wings, and, with our field-glasses, a great crowd of birds, the brown pelicans upon their nests. With eager anticipation, we made ready our battery of cameras for the bloodless fray, casting anxious glances at the heavy,

cumulus clouds, that threatened to spoil the light at the critical moment. And now we were close enough to take in clearly the whole situation. Here was the low, flat islet of only about three acres, somewhat triangular in form. A few small palmettos, low mangrove bushes, and stumps were standing, but most of the area was an open expanse, overgrown with tall weeds and grass, except for two considerable sandy tracts at the east and southwest corners. Each of these barren places was fairly covered with an army of great birds, about the size of geese, of a grayish color above and dark brown beneath, with long brown and white neck, and enormous bill with pendant pouch, that was held pointed downward in most ridiculously solemn, pompous fashion. A few birds were located at the northwest end, and there were also small, overflow colonies on at least two other islands a short distance eastward. These brown pelicans are a southern species, entirely different from the white pelican, the only other kind found in North America,

that occurs mostly in the interior and on the Gulf, and breeds on islands in lakes from Minnesota northward.

From time immemorial this little island has been the principal, if not the only, breeding-ground of all the brown pelicans of the east coast of Florida. Though there are hundreds of other islands, apparently just as good, this one alone attracts the pelicans. Dastardly plume-hunters have, at times, all but annihilated them; egg-collectors have robbed them of every egg in sight; yet they remain faithful to the home-land of their ancestors. Creatures of habit, they are, like chickens that persist in roosting in the orchard, despite the advent of winter, cold and storms.

Our boat was now closely approaching the eastern end of the island, and we camerists held ready our instruments, expecting at every moment to see the birds rise in a cloud and leave the vicinity, as do the white pelicans in the North. To make sure of present opportunity, we took snapshots of the birds as they yet sat upon their nests. Then we



"Nests on the bushes or trees were built of sticks, lined with grass."



"Even when we sprang on shore the birds on the farther side remained on their nests in utter unconcern."

prepared in earnest for the grand flight. The boat was run ashore abreast of the colony, but without alarming them. Then we stood up and shouted, but only the nearer birds flew. There they sat upon their nests, hundreds and hundreds of them, many within about fifty feet, solemnly gazing at us. It was not until we sprang upon the shore that there was any general flight, and even then the birds upon the farther side of the group remained upon their nests in utter unconcern. We also noticed with delight, as we went back to the boat for more plates, that the flying birds, after a short circuit over the water, returned at once to their nests. The fear that it would be impossible to secure pictures at close range was groundless.

Equipped with all needed photographic implements, we now started out for a tour of inspection. Hundreds of nests were before us, a few of them built on the spreading limbs or tops of the mangroves; but the great majority were on the sand, usually about a yard apart. Those on the bushes or trees were built of sticks, lined with grass, and were quite bulky, while those on the ground were small and rude, composed only of grass and soft materials. The contents of the nests were greatly varied. Though the nesting season of the pelicans begins in January, many of the nests still had their comple-

ments of great, dirty-white eggs. These may have been second or third layings, owing to previous depredations, though to what extent individual pelicans may be irregular in their time for laying, I cannot say. In other nests there were young, in various stages, from the naked, newly hatched, and rather repulsive looking things, to the more sightly, yet not altogether handsome, downy stage. Still other nests were empty, but that their mission had not been fruitless was evident from the numbers of well-grown young that were running about in all directions. Many of them were all but able to fly, though their bodies were more or less downy and ragged. In color they were very different from their parents, being of a lighter gray, and mainly white on the under parts.

These young pelicans afforded us no little amusement. Though they evidently inherited somewhat of the true pelican gravity, their childishness could not be concealed. For one thing they were, like most children, eminently social. They reminded me of gangs of boys upon the street corners, as they gathered here and there in groups, chattering away in peculiar guttural tones, that often rose to loud, harsh screams when individuals got into a fight, which was all too often. They could not have learned these disagreeable manners from their parents, who are peaceable and



"The flying birds, after a short circuit, returned to their nests."

silent. For want of better reason, we shall have to lay it to innate natural depravity, that only the grace of further education and experience overcomes. Then the gang would scamper away, perhaps bent upon some gay prank. Those on the mangroves could not run from us, but gave, as we approached, a rousing reception, making terrific lunges at us with loud snaps of the bill, with screams that would repel any enemy.

The pelicans secure food for their young by plunging headlong into the sea and catching fish in their seine-like pouch. Though all youngsters are supposed to be in a chronic state of hunger, these children require to be fed only twice a day—morning and afternoon, we are told. Strangely enough, though the river seems to be full of fish, the pelican parents do not fish anywhere near the island, though the young may do so later. In flocks they fly across the narrow strip of "hummock," or jungle, that separates the river—which is properly a salt-water lagoon—from the ocean, where they may be seen off the beach sailing about and plunging after their prey. It was not the regular feeding time while we were on the island, and we saw the curious feeding process but a few times. The youngster thrust head and neck away down into the parent's gullet, with greedy violence, and gobbled away at the partly digested fish.

In the case of the older children, roaming about in bands, it may be a question whether the parents can identify their own, or whether communism is not, for the time, the order of pelican society.

Presently we made a visit to the other large group of pelicans at the southwest corner of the island, about a hundred and fifty yards from the first. Here we found a similar state of affairs. Each of the many occupied nests was brooded over by a devoted parent—whether the male or female, I could not tell. The citizens all dress well, and look remarkably neat and clean. But let not the visitor hope to vie with the pelicans in neatness of apparel or cleanliness, upon *that* island. The passing birds are continually dropping a watery excrement as they fly, which, though it does not seem to stick upon the oily plumage of the pelicans, certainly does not allow the garments of human visitors to remain unspotted. The ground, too, is very dirty, infested by swarms of insects, and in a short time our clothing and cameras were well besmeared.

Naturally, we were interested to make an estimate of the population of Pelican Island. As nearly as we could count, there were 450 nests at the east end, 512 at the southwest, and 14 at the northwest, making 976 in all. This means 1,952 adult birds on the island.

The City of the Pelicans



"Many nests still held their complement of great, dirty-white eggs."



"Naked, newly-hatched, repulsive-looking things."



"The not altogether handsome, downy stage."

The most common number of eggs in a nest was three, but quite frequently there were only two. In only one nest did we find four, and in one other five. If we assume that each pair raises two young, the colony would double its numbers every season, if not disturbed. Though we did not land on the adjacent islands, where the other pelicans were nesting, we sailed close by, and estimated, from appearances, that there were over 200 nests. Supposing, then, that there were 1,200 nests in all, the total adult population of the colony can be placed at 2,400.

Mr. F. M. Chapman has recorded that on a visit to this island, in 1898, he counted 845 nests, and noticed a very few on another nearby island. Assuming that there were then 900 nests in all, the colony has apparently increased about one-third in four years. This desirable result may be due to the better enforcement of strict laws in Florida against the destruction of plume-bearing birds, the efforts of the American Ornithologists' Union in appointing a warden to guard the colony, and a bettering of



"She would settle down, * * * seeming to say :
'I'm all ready now ; pull your string.'"



“There they sat upon their nests, hundreds and hundreds of them, many within fifty feet.”

public sentiment in Florida, owing to a realization of the great value of wild life in attracting tourists. Our own party is a case in point. To see this pelican colony, heron rookeries, and other bird resorts, three of us—one more having followed—had come from New England, distributing several hundred dollars among railroads, boarding-house keepers, outfitters, traders, stablemen, and guides. And thousands of others do likewise. The people of

bought another four-by-five camera, and adapted it so that I can use the lens (an astigmat) of the five by seven interchangeably on both. This gives a somewhat larger image of a bird at a given distance than with the smaller lens. As it is seldom possible to secure a larger image of a wild bird or animal that can readily find room on a four by five plate, I prefer to use the small camera and large lens for most of my work, since the weight of a large camera, with a sufficient



"Well grown young * * * were different from their parents, being of a lighter gray."

Florida, or other states, are short-sighted indeed, if they allow vandals and plume-hunters to massacre these interesting and valuable wild creatures.

A little account of our photographic work on Pelican Island may be of interest. I brought with me two long-focus cameras, five by seven and four by five, the former mostly for view work, the smaller one for birds and nests at close range, and for long, hard tramps. Since returning from Florida I have

number of holders and plates for a day's work—especially in wading marshes and penetrating swamps in a hot sun—is almost prohibitive.

To this equipment I have added a high power telephoto lens, which I find very useful, especially in bird colonies, or places where large and shy birds congregate. It gives sharp definition, even at full aperture, especially on a small plate, and thus allows of quite short exposure—half a second, or less—

in bright sunlight. The one essential is that it be kept absolutely without jar or movement during exposure; and I usually find it best to prop up the front with a stick, or with a light rod carried for the purpose. With a focal plane shutter on a long-focus camera of the reflex type for flight pictures, the same lens interchangeable, the battery is complete for every emergency in practical bird photography. Yet one good instrument alone is very satisfactory, and if I were to select one instrument for general work in nature photography, I would have a long-focus four-by-five camera, of any reliable, well-known make; preferably with a larger lens than the ordinary, and a high-power telephoto attachment.

Now about the actual photographic work on the island. First I took a number of general views, snapshots with the camera in hand, of the pelicans on their nests and in flight. Then, with the camera on the tripod, I photographed nests at close range, with eggs and young, using a ball and socket clamp, which makes it possible to point the camera in any direction. When these routine matters had been disposed of, I had the rest of the precious time for that fascinating, but often nerve-wearing, branch of the subject,—bird portraiture. In general the method is to place the camera, preferably not on the tripod, concealed as well as circumstances will permit, near a nest or place to which the bird is likely to return; attach a spool of black linen thread or rubber tube to the shutter of the camera—I much prefer the former—retire to a more or less distant hiding-place, as the case may require, and, awaiting the return of the subject, pull or squeeze at the opportune moment. I always use the lens at full aperture, one-fiftieth of a second in bright sunshine with the quickest of plates, or the briefest timed interval, if the light is dull. If the day be dark, the case is almost hopeless, for birds are very active, and are nearly certain to move when they hear the click of the shutter—for there is no shutter which I have been able to find that is really silent.

Over at the farther end of the southwest settlement the area of nests extended almost to a tract of tall weeds. Here I found it convenient to plant the camera on the shortened tripod, allowing the weeds to arch over it, where it commanded a view of a number of nests at moderate distance. When I withdrew a few yards, the birds at once returned,

and I pulled the thread. Then, after two or three such exposures, I placed the camera on its case upon the ground, and focused upon a near-by nest, covering the camera with the rubber cloth and then with dry grass. The birds did not seem afraid of it—though in similar cases they usually are—and returned very soon, giving me all the exposures I wished.

Over in the eastern colony a pelican that had her nest at the foot of a stub returned readily to her eggs, though I had placed the larger camera on the sand, without concealment, but little over a yard away. She would waddle past the camera and onto her nest, settle down, and draw in her chin in the usual dignified attitude, seeming to say, "I'm all ready now; pull your string!" I also set the camera on the tripod in the open, near some nests on a mangrove, and pulled the thread when some of the old birds alighted on the empty nests, near the large youngsters. Another successful method was to drive a company of these well-grown young down to the shore, where they would stop and allow me to creep up within ten feet before taking to the water.

We stayed on the island until half after four, but were careful not to remain in any one spot near nests, thus keeping the birds away. Newly-hatched young will soon die in the sun, if not brooded; and visitors to bird colonies will do well to remember this, or they may do great damage.

During the day the wind, which had started up from the north, had steadily increased, and all the afternoon had been blowing a gale down the river. We waited in vain for it to veer to the southeast, as such a wind on the Indian River usually does by night, and at length we had to start on our long hard beat to windward. Our craft was a wretched sea-boat. Every wave broke fairly over her, and after the first few moments we were all soaked to the skin. By dark we had hardly made four miles, and were almost perishing with cold—yes, even in Florida! We debated leaving the boat, to walk across the strip of jungle and up the ocean beach, the character of the river shore making walking there impossible. But the fear of stepping on rattlesnakes in the dark deterred us, and we pounded wearily along. The night was dark, indeed, when the wind canted a few points to the eastward, and at a late hour, weary, shivering, hungry, we reached Oak Lodge again, not sorry, however, that we had visited wonderful Pelican Island.

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